

LADY BEWARE

Don't go hangin' round that laundry room

Traditional tips on avoiding rape have not pleased modern feminists. Often women are told to change their lifestyles to steer clear of men who rape. Lady Beware is a pamphlet distributed by police departments across Canada. It portrays rapists as strangers who lurk in dark alleys and neglects to mention that most rape victims are attacked by male friends, lovers or acquaintances.

Beth Weisberg, of the University of Saskatchewan's student newspaper, *The Sheaf*, interviewed Sergeant Rusty Chartier of the Saskatoon Police Department about Lady Beware and its recommendations for women.

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By BETH WEISBERG

Sheaf: There's a suggestion in (the pamphlet) that in theatres one should avoid dark corners and sit near the aisle. Would you like to comment on that?

Chartier: Well, when you're near the aisle you can get away much more easily than if you're stuck in the middle or back in the dark corner where someone can come and pin you in against a wall.

Sheaf: Do you have many reports of assaults from theatres?

Chartier: No. No.

Sheaf: What about "Never remain alone in an apartment laundry room, a mailroom, or parking garage?" I mean, there are times when you just can't avoid being that way.

Chartier: Well, then as long as you're aware of it so that if something doesn't feel right to you or seem right to you, you can take evasive action. A laundry room or a parkade can be a dangerous situation. It isn't 9/10 of the time, but that one time it could be. You should be thinking about it (and knowing what to do if that person attempts to do anything).

Sheaf: There's the section in the pamphlet "What will you do if you are attacked?" It says "think before you struggle," but I'm not really sure what that means. What are you supposed to be thinking about?

Chartier: Think before you struggle, plain and simple. Is it going to be to your detriment to struggle? Would you be better to go along? It's like a bank robbery and that's the first thing you tell tellers in there: Stop and think. I know it's hard to do that when there's a gun in your face, but that's still the only and safest way of doing something. So you've got to catch yourself up, and say 'think' so you're watching that person trying to get a description or any of these other things. You don't panic, holler, scream and things like that.

Now, hollering and screaming might be better; you might be in a crowded area, just a little niche out of the way and that would be the best thing that could happen or you're just in a little alcove on the street or something.

Sheaf: The pamphlet also advises you to "be sure he has no weapon." I'm not really sure how you'd go about doing that.

Chartier: It's possible that he has a weapon — this is part of the thing of thinking. If he hasn't got one in his hand he might not have one, but mind you, his hands are as good a weapon as anything really, so you've got to always consider that he's got one. If you start screaming where there's nobody around what's that gonna do? He might bring out a weapon and use it on

you or use his hands. It's just a matter like we tell our tellers — or the bank's tellers — keep cool and try to think your way out of the situation.

Sheaf: And it also says (to consider) "are you as quick and can fight as well as he can?" The suggestion here is if you are quick and can fight as well as he can, which I'm not really sure how you would determine without getting into an actual fight to begin with, you should try and escape?

Chartier: Well, there again you've got to think of your situation, where you're at and that. Now I don't know what you're looking at, if it's theft, robbery or anything, you give him the money and let him go. If it's sexual assault or anything like that, a lot of things come into play, I suppose. It's what you think about certain situations like that and if it looks inevitable that it's gonna happen, then it's a matter probably of thinking morality over living if this is what you feel and believe will happen.

Sheaf: I'm not really sure what you mean by morality there.

Chartier: Well, you know, they've made saints out of women who died instead of giving in to a person ...

Sheaf: You mean in a rape ...

Chartier: I'm talking about a sexual assault. If it was robbery or something else there's no doubt whatsoever ... you give him the money unless greed reigns supreme and you aren't going to give him your money. That's a foolish move, but this is what you've got to think about.

Sheaf: So you're saying that sexual assault is a moral issue?

Chartier: No; well, it is for some people. You know, how you've been brought up, your cultural learnings and beliefs. You just have to read history to know (some women) were made saints because they resisted advances of men. But that's your own decision to make at the particular time.

Sheaf: There's a statement in the pamphlet: "Treat the rapist as a person no matter how repulsive he may be. If you treat him like an animal he may act like one." I really have problems with that. First of all it says if you treat him like an animal he may act like one, but...

Chartier: He's acting like one as it is, isn't he? But it'll just promote or aggravate him more. It's like a bank teller saying, "No, I'm not going to give you the money." He'll shoot her, sometimes.

Sheaf: But it's not just that, it says treat him as a person.

Chartier: That's right. You know, you've gotta stop and think and assess your situation. What do you do? You don't start bad-mouthing him, calling him a pig and everything else. Just like a hostage — you don't insult the hostage taker in that. You sit down; you do what he tells you; you look him in the eye when you talk to him; you don't force your ideas or will upon him or try to. That's what it means there — if you start going in there and insulting him, calling him names, even beating on him

when you know beating isn't going to do any good, you're gonna be the loser.

Sheaf: Well, what should you say to him?

Chartier: Well, I don't know — you've got to assess that particular situation.

Sheaf: But in that situation you're not going to have time to stop and think.

Chartier: You've got to take time to think. And you have time to think.

Sheaf: When do you have time to think?

Chartier: You should never do it impulsively ... we teach that all the time. We're not the ones, it's psychiatrists ... that determine this is how you should treat these situations ... it might be contrary to the way you think, but that's how you should act.

Sheaf: (The pamphlet says) if you choose to physically resist you should use the eye attack and the testicle attack as a last resort.

Chartier: That's right.

Sheaf: Why would that be? So that you're not going to injure him?

Chartier: No, no. (So) that you don't get yourself injured. Like I say, a woman probably has less chance of beating a man no matter what, with or without weapons. What they're saying is ... don't treat him like an animal, which might be fighting scratching, gouging, kicking or anything else. If you know you're going to die, and I think it gets to that point somewhere if not in that pamphlet then in some other book, then you go for it. But there's few times that a situation like that would call for that.

Sheaf: Well yes, it says (to use the eye or testicle attack) in the defense of your life or severe bodily harm.

Chartier: Yup.

Sheaf: What would you define as severe bodily harm?

Chartier: Well, it's not what I think, it's what you determine. It's your situation, it's not mine or somebody else's. Basically, all that thing is telling you is: think, and be aware.

Sheaf: Would you say that rape could be defined as severe bodily harm?

Chartier: Well that's — some people's might be, other people's might not be.

Sheaf: If a person had been sexually assaulted, what would they do? It says here to "report it to the police right away — quick investigation will substantiate the facts needed for prosecution — do not change or clean your clothes — do not shower or bathe until you have been examined by a doctor — do not take any drugs or alcohol to calm yourself. It may destroy some evidence and hinder the gathering of physical evidence." So, the idea is to call the police, wait for them to come, then what? They take your statement or take you to the doctor first as...

Chartier: That's right. They take you to the doctor first.

Sheaf: So could you go to the hospital and call the police from there?

Chartier: No, you should do like it says ... Call the police — that's the first thing you do. And then you do what the police tell you.